

# Tawheed-ul-Ibaadah

## An Explanation of the Truth of Monotheism

By Shaykh Saleh al-Fawzaan

---

### Contents

Introduction.....	2
Kinds Of Belief In The Oneness Of Allah.....	5
Attributing Associates To Allah In Worship.....	10
<b>FIRST:</b> A common suspicion of past and contemporary people is that they have inherited these practices from their ancestors.....	10
<b>SECOND:</b> A suspicion raised by the pagans of Quraish and others to justify their deeds of idolatry was the issue of divine predestination.....	12
<b>THIRD:</b> A suspicion raised by pagans is that by merely uttering the testimony (There is no god but Allah), one is entitled to enter Paradise .....	13
<b>FOURTH:</b> Pagans also claimed that no idolatry ( <i>Shirk</i> ) will take place among the people of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as long as they say "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah" .....	14
<b>FIFTH:</b> They also argue on the basis of a Hadith which says, "Certainly Satan has despaired from being adored by prayer holders in the Arabian Peninsula" .....	15
<b>SIXTH:</b> Regarding the pagans' attachment to the issue of intercession ( <i>Shafaa'ah</i> ), such claimers say, "We do not want virtuous people and saints to provide for our needs, but we want them to intercede with Allah for us .....	15
<b>SEVENTH:</b> Another suspicion concerns the status of virtuous people and saints whom Allah has raised in dignity .....	17
<b>EIGHTH:</b> From the following verses, the idolaters deduce the permissibility of seeking mediators between themselves and Allah.....	18
<b>NINTH:</b> A contention of the idolaters is also indicated through their attachment to some controversial Prophetic traditions .....	20
<b>TENTH:</b> The claimers of such permission of intercession also depend on tales and dreams.....	20
<b>ELEVENTH:</b> The idolaters (Mushrikeen) also argue that certain persons received fulfillment of their desires (at certain shrines, or through the virtue of certain pious men or saints) .....	21
<b>TWELFTH:</b> Extremist mystics and their followers say that idolatry ( <i>Shirk</i> ) is the love of the worldly life and the yearning to attain its pleasure .....	22
Conclusions .....	22

## **INTRODUCTION**

Praise be to Allah, the Almighty, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, and peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, last of the Prophets, and upon all those who adhere to his example until the Day of Judgement.

Faith is the foundation upon which the whole structure of nations is based. Therefore, the progress of each nation is dependent upon the maintenance of its faith and ideology. Thus, all Prophets (peace be upon them) have called for true faith. Every Prophet told his people from the very beginning, **"Worship Allah, the Almighty. You have no other god but Him"**[Surah Â'raf (7): 59]. **"And verily, We have sent among every *Ummah* (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): 'Worship Allâh (Alone), and avoid *Tâghût* (all false deities)'"**. [Surah Nahl (16) : 36.] This is because Allah the Almighty created all people to worship Him alone and set up no associate to Him. **"I have only created jinns and men that they may worship Me (alone)"**. [Surah Dhaariyaat (51): 56]

Worship is the exclusive right of Allah owed to Him by His creation mankind. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) once said to Muath ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him): *"Do you know what duties and rights people have towards Allah'? The duty of mankind towards Allah is to worship Him and attribute no partner to Him. The right of mankind is that Allah will not torture those who do not attribute any partner to Him."* [Sahih Bukhari 13/300 (Arabic Edition). and Muslim, 30]. This right of worship is the foremost right of Allah owed to Him by His people. **"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him."**[Surah Isra 17:23]. **"Say (O Muhammad SAW): 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything in worship with Him (Allah)'"** [Surah An'am 6:151]

This right has priority over all other rights because it is the foundation upon which all other precepts of the religion (of Islam) are based.

Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) during the thirteen years of his preaching in Makkah, constantly called upon people to observe this right of Allah and forbid any partner to Him. The Qur'an in most of its verses, has confirmed this concept and negated any resemblance to Him. Every Muslim in his five daily prayers pledges to Allah to observe this right by saying, **"You alone do we worship and only Your assistance do we seek."** [Surah Fatiha 1: 5]

This great right is referred to as the singleness of worship, deity or objective and purpose. This monotheism is ingrained in man's nature. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said *"Every child is born with a (pure) innate character. His parents may turn him to become a Jew, a Christian or Mazdist"* [Sahih Muslim No. 2047 (Arabic Edition)]. Therefore, believing in the oneness of Allah is innate and original, whereas idolatry (*Shirk*) is spurious and unnatural. Man will deviate from the right path only because of false upbringing and surroundings. Allah the Almighty stated in the Qur'an **"Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book, in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed"**[Baqarah 2: 23]. Similarly, He, the Almighty, also stated in the Qur'an **"Mankind was but one nation, but differed later"** [Yunus 10: 19].

Moreover, Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) said, *"Ten centuries lapsed from Adam to Noah (peace be upon them and all people adhered to Islam during that period)".* [Tafseer Ibn Kathir, 1: 250]. Ibn-ul-Qaiyim, the learned scholar, commented on this by saying "This interpretation (by Ibn Abbas) of the above verse is correct." [Ibn-ul-Qaiyim : Ighathatul-Lahfan 2 : 201] He cited examples from the Qur'an to support this idea and confirmed it in his commentary, "The Meaning of the Qur'an".

The first incident of polytheism took place among the people of Noah when they exceeded the limits of respect for their saints and started worshipping them despite exhortation by their Prophets. As it is stated in the Qur'an **"And they have said (to each other), abandon not your gods : abandon neither Wadd for Suwa, neither Yaguth nor Yauq"**. [Nuh 71: 23]. Bukhari quoted Ibn Abbas as saying that *"The above names were those of pious men among the people of Noah. When these pious men died, Satan suggested to the people of Noah that they erect statues of those pious men in their homes and call the statues by these pious men's names. Thus, people did so, but did not worship the statues. The statues, however, in later generations become idols to be worshipped."* [Sahih Bukhari 6 : 133]

Ibn-ul-Qaiyim said "Noah's people were led to idolatry (*Shirk*) because they aggrandized their dead by sculpturing their images. Such is the case with most idolaters." [Ibn-ul-Qaiyim, Ighathatul-Lahfan 2 : 202]. Some were made to worship stars, as they believed that stars are influential elements in the universe. Later, they built shrines, appointed gate keepers and custodians and fixed offerings and rites for the stars. The same method still continues, apparently originating from the Sabians, the people of Abraham. Abraham (peace be upon him) argued with his people

pointing out to them the falsehood of idolatry. He silenced them with arguments and shattered their idols. Consequently, his people demanded that he be set on fire.

"We noticed that some people made statues of the moon, thinking that the moon controlled the world and, thus, deserved worship. The Magians, adherents of Mazdaism, worship fire; they make many shrines for it and appoint caretakers who do not allow the flame to die out for a single moment. Some groups worship water, believing that it is the origin and source of everything. Other groups worship animals, like horses or cows. Others have worshipped men, alive or dead, while still others have worshipped jinn, trees or angel. [Ibid : 2 : 218, 219,229, 230,231,233]

From the above, we can learn the following:

1 - Hanging pictures on walls and setting up statues and sculptured images lead people to idolatry because excessive exaltation of these pictures and statues develops into a belief that they bring good and prevent harm, as evidenced in the example of the people of Noah.

2 - Satan is bent on deceiving mankind. He will try every trick to exploit man's sentiments. When Satan observed among the people of Noah their emotional liking for pious people, he tempted them to exceed their love and finally made them place those people's statues in their dwellings in order to make them stray from the right path.

3 - Not only does Satan try to deceive the present generation, he also keeps his eye on the future generations. When he could not plunge the present generation of the people of Noah into idolatry, he anticipated the coming generation to be misled and set a trap for it.

4 - Negligence must not be shown toward evil, but it must be eradicated and all its doors must be closed.

5 - The presence of diligent and learned men is a blessing because Satan can deceive the people after the learned men among them had passed away.

## **KINDS OF BELIEF IN THE ONENESS OF ALLAH**

Belief in the Oneness of Allah is of two kinds:

- 1) Belief in the Oneness of Allah in the sense that He, alone, has created the whole universe, and
- 2) Belief that He, alone, manages its affairs. He, alone, causes life and death, and He, alone, brings good and drives away evil.

Such belief in the Oneness of Allah is universal and fundamental and there can be no disputes over it. Even' idolaters themselves confessed it as mentioned in the Qur'an, **"Say: who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight? And what is it that brings the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs? They will soon say, Allah. Say: Will you not then show piety to Him"** [Yunus 10 : 31]

There are similar verses in the Qur'an which clearly state that idolaters have been admitting to this kind of Oneness of Allah but yet, they have denied the Oneness of Allah in the sense of worship. Idolaters knew that this requires that Allah the Almighty be worshipped alone, and that He, alone, be invoked for any need or assistance. This is clearly reflected in the article of faith, "There is no god but Allah". This means that all worship is owed only to Allah, alone. Therefore, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the pagans of Makkah to say these words, they refused by saying, **"Has he made the gods (all) into one ilaah (god)? Truly this is a strange thing!"** [Sad 38: 5]. The idolaters realized that whoever uttered these words would nullify homage to all except Allah. These words would prove that worship is owed to Allah Alone. A close look at the Arabic word "ilah" means one who is venerated and worshipped. Worship includes all visible or invisible words or deeds for the pleasure of Allah. Therefore, whoever said these words, and continued to invoke other than Allah, would surely contradict himself. Hence, we notice both kinds of belief in this oneness of Allah are correlated.

Thus a person who believes in the Oneness of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe has to worship Him alone and refrain from associating any partner with Him of any sort whatsoever. All the prophets asked their people to submit themselves to

Allah alone. Allah Almighty said, **"That is Allah, your Lord!. There is no god but He, the Creator of all things. Then worship Him, and He has power to dispose of all affairs."** [An'am 6:102]. He, the Almighty has also stated in the Qur'an **"If indeed, you ask them who is it that created the heavens and the earth, they would be sure to say, 'Allah'. Say: See you then the things that you invoke besides Allah? Can they, if Allah wills some penalty for me, remove His penalty ? Or if He will some grace for me, can they keep back His grace?"** [Zumar 39:38]. This acknowledgment of Allah's unity as the only Cherisher and Sustainer of the universe is deeply rooted in the nature of mankind No one disputes it. Even idolaters admit this fact. No one is known among the various sects of the world to have negated this fact except the atheists, who believe in the materialistic doctrine. They say that the world proceeds by itself without anyone to rule or regulate its affairs. Allah the Almighty has said, **"And they (the atheists) say: What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us."** So Allah said to them, **"But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture"** [Jathiyah 45 : 24]. It is evident that their denial of Allah is based on a mere assumption and they have no proof. Hypothetical conclusions do not help in guiding to the right path. Therefore, they had no answer to the word of Allah. Allah said, **"Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators? or did they create the heavens and the earth ? No, they have no firm belief."** [Tur 52: 35-36]

They also have no answer for the statement of Allah, the Almighty in the Qur'an **"Such is the creation of Allah : Now show Me what is there that others besides Him have created."** [Luqman 31:11]. **"Say : Do you see what it is you invoke besides Allah ? Show me what it is they created on earth, or have they a share in the heavens?"** [Ahqaf 46:4]. Those who pretend to deny this unity of Allah in fact confess it in their hearts as Pharoah did. Allah Almighty said, **"Moses said to Pharoah, "You know well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth."** [Isra 17:102]. Allah, the Almighty stated also about Pharoah and his people **"And they rejected those signs in iniquity and arrogance , though their souls were convinced there of."** [Naml 27:14].

He, the Almighty said about previous nations : **"Remember, also, the Ad and the Thamud (people) Clearly will appear to you from (the traces) of their buildings (their fate) Satan made their deeds alluring to them and kept them back from the path, though they were gifted with the intelligence and skill."** [Ankabut 29: 38]

Thus we notice that there has never been any group denying the Oneness of Allah in the sense that He alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

Magians (adherents of Mazdaism) believe in two gods, light as creator of virtue and darkness as creator of vice. They believe that the original one is light and darkness is casual resulting of it, and that light is superior to darkness.

Similarly, Christians who believe in the trinity agree that the Creator of the world is one. They say that "God, the father" is superior, but they cannot prove the separate gods. We conclude that the Oneness of Allah as Creator and Sustainer of the world is unanimously accepted. Very seldom do we hear of a group making others as separate to Allah in this particular sense.

But acknowledgement of Allah as the sole Sustainer of the world is not enough to become a Muslim. It is essential that this belief be substantiated with practice, i.e. to worship Allah, Alone, without invoking others for help. Pagans, particularly Arab infidels, acknowledge Allah as the sole Creator and Sustainer, but they cannot be regarded as Muslims unless they substantiate this belief with practice, i.e., to worship Allah alone. If we look into the verses of the Qur'an, we see that they call for the Oneness of Allah in worship. The various verses of the Qur'an tell us that unbelievers acknowledge Allah as the Only Sustainer of the universe, but their deeds do not conform to their belief. Therefore, they are admonished to confirm the oneness of Allah in their worship and in their deeds. Allah Almighty said, **"O you people ! Adore your Guardian Lord Who Created you and those who came before you that you may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy: and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth there-with fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when you know (the truth)"** [Baqarah 2: 21-22] which was the first command to people in the Qur'an by Allah, the Almighty.

We often find in the Qur'an a call to the Oneness of Allah in worship. Simultaneously, the Qur'an clarifies all doubts cast around this Oneness. In every chapter, virtually in every verse, this call for the Oneness of Allah is repeated. This is because the Qur'an continuously informs its reader about Allah, His Names, His Attributes and His Characteristics, all reflecting his Oneness as the Creator and Sustainer, or when the Qur'an calls people to worship Him alone and refrain from worshipping anything or anyone besides Him. This is the Oneness in worship. Then the Qur'an informs people about Allah's grace in this life and His subsequent reward in the Hereafter for those who adhere to this Oneness totally. It also warns people about the punishment for idolaters in this world and the Hereafter. The Qur'an also outlines the laws and commands of Allah, since Allah, alone, is the sole legislative power. This is the true manifestation of the Oneness of Allah.

This Oneness, with all its implications, is contained in the saying, "There is no god but Allah." It negates divine power from all and confirms it with Allah, the One and Only God. This, also, implies a "pledge of allegiance" to Allah and rejection of any partner to Him in any form. The Qur'an mentions the statement of Abraham (peace be upon him), **"I do indeed clear myself of what you worship. I worship only Him who made me and He will certainly guide me."** [Zukhruf 43: 26-27]. Such has been the course of all the prophets who were sent by Allah. Allah the Almighty said **"And verily, We have sent among every *Ummah* (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid *Tâghût* (all false deities i.e. do not worship *Tâghût* besides Allâh)."** [Nahl 16: 36]. He, the Almighty also said **"Whoever disbelieves in *Tâghût* and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break."** [Baqarah 2 :256]. Therefore, whoever has said "There is no god but Allah" has disavowed himself from worshipping anything other than Allah, and he has committed himself to worshipping Allah solely. In saying these words, he undertakes a pledge. **"Then anyone who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul. And anyone who fulfils what has been covenanted to Allah, Allah will soon grant him a great reward."** [Fath 48:10]

It is clear now that "There is no god but Allah" is a declaration to worship the one and only God, e.g. Allah because (Allah) means deity, and therefore no one deserves to be worshipped except Allah. And whoever has uttered these words knowing their meaning and acting upon that meaning (negating idolatry and confirming the Oneness of Allah as the sole Creator as well as the only one to be worshipped), in addition to having adopted them in letter and spirit, can be regarded as a true Muslim. One who has uttered these words and practised their meanings in public, but without accepting them in his heart, is a hypocrite. One who uttered these words with his tongue, but acted against their meaning through committing idolatry, is an unbeliever, even if he uttered these words more than once as in the case of those who adorn tombs, for although they utter these words they do so without understanding their meaning.

Thus, these words leave no impact on their actions. You hear them say, "There is no god but Allah", but you also hear them calling "O Abdul Qadir", or "O Badawi", or other pious individuals. They invoke the dead for help when faced with adversity. The idolators (*Mushrikeen*) of old times were better informed of the meaning of these words, i.e. commitment to the Oneness in worship of Allah, the Almighty, than those people who adorn the tombs and graves of pious people. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the idolators (*Mushrikeen*) to say "La Ilaha ilallah : (There is no god but Allah), they realized that these words of commitment to Oneness clearly meant



that they must abandon idolatry and worship Allah alone. Therefore, the idolators' answer was : **"Has he made the gods (all) into one ilaah (god)?"** [Sad 38: 5]. About the people of Hud, the Qur'an says, **"They said, You came to us, that we may worship Allah alone and give up the cult of our fathers?"** [Araaf 7: 70]. The people of Saleh said, **"Do you forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped?"** [Hud 11: 62]

About the people of Noah, the Qur'an relates, **"And they have said (to each other), Abandon not your gods : abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa, neither Yaguth or Yauq no Nasr."** [Nuh 71: 23]. This is how the unbelievers understood the meaning of (There is no god but Allah) - that it means to give up deities and come forward to worship Allah only. That is why they refused to utter these words of Monotheism, for there could not be any compromise with their adoration of Lat, Uzza or Manat, the well known idols. But, amazingly, those who adore graves today do not realize this contradiction. They utter these words and continue their adoration of the dead.

Thus, we notice that some people interpret "God" as the one capable of invention, creation and origination. In this context, the meaning of "There is no god but Allah" will be that no one is capable of creation except Allah. This is one of the worst mistakes because it goes no farther than what the unbelievers had already acknowledged. We notice that idolaters and others had affirmed that no one is capable of invention, creation, sustenance and causing life or death except Allah. [As reported by Philosophers. See also "Risalat-ut.Tawhid" of Md. Abduh] This statement of the unbelievers is illustrated in a previously mentioned Qur'anic verse. However, they could not become Muslims by this confession because this alone does not fulfill the requirement of the testimony of faith, "There is no god but Allah".

## **ATTRIBUTING ASSOCIATES TO ALLAH IN WORSHIP**

We have indicated earlier the first occurrence in which people placed humans or other objects in positions to share with Allah His sole right to be worshipped. Such practice unfortunately continues to the present; this is polytheism which is of two kinds. The first is greater idolatry which is committed by Muslims by performing deeds, such as slaughtering in the names of other persons or deities than Allah, or by adoring others in any form that will make them dearer than, or even equal to Allah the Almighty. The second is idolatry of a lesser degree which makes one's faith inferior, and which may sometimes place one outside of the Islamic faith. This applies to those taking oaths in the name of other persons or deities than Allah, or uttering words like, "by the life of so and so, or by the sun, moon or stars, etc."

Such polytheism has developed among people because they have distanced themselves from the Book of Allah and the Prophet's traditions. They are determined to imitate their ancestors even though they have strayed from the right path of Allah. They exalt some of the dead saints or pious people to the extent of worship. For example, they build shrines on these deceased saints' graves. All of this happens because such people are not aware of the facts of their religion, Islam. As Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) stated, *"The bonds of Islam will indeed breakdown, one after the other, if one who has grown up in Islam has not known about the pre-Islamic paganism."* Many people are misled due to circulation of various doubts of stories and heresies which they inadvertently consider as authentic evidences to justify their deeds. Some of these doubts are similar to those previously raised by idolaters of past people and generations. Here are some examples of such doubts and suspicions:

### **FIRST:**

A common suspicion of past and contemporary people is that they have inherited these practices from their ancestors. About them, Allah the Almighty said, **"Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner (i.e. a messenger who calls to the worship of Allah the Almighty) before you to any people, the wealthy ones among them said, 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps.'" [Zakhruf 43:23]**

Those who cannot produce any proof for their plea resort to this type of invalid argument. That, of course, is reasonable. How can they be sure that their ancestors

were right ? Then again, why should they blindly follow their ancestors' footsteps ? Allah Almighty said, **"When it is said to them, follow what Allah has revealed, they say, No! We shall follow the way of our fathers. What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance"** [Maidah 5 :104]. Also, **"Even if their fathers knew nothing and were astray?"** [Baqarah 2 :170]. To follow the footsteps of fathers is commendable if they were on the right path. Concerning Joseph (peace be upon him), Allah, the Almighty said **"And I follow the ways of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: Never could we attribute any partners whatsoever to Allah; that comes of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind, yet most men are ungrateful."** [Yousuf 12: 38]. Allah also said, **"And those who believe and whose families follow them in faith, to them shall We join their families."** [Tur 52 :21]

Suspicion was always raised by people in answer to the call of Prophets. The people replied to the call of Noah (peace be upon him), as we notice in the Qur'an **"We sent Noah to his people; he said, 'O my people worship Allah, you have no other god but Him. Will you not fear Him? The unbelievers among his people said, 'He is no more than a man like yourselves; his wish is to assert his superiority over you If Allah had wished to send messengers, He could have sent down angels. Never did we hear such a thing as he says among our ancestors of old.'"**

[Muminun 23: 23-24]

The unbelievers wanted to take the practice of their ancestors against the commands of Allah which were presented to them by their Prophets (peace be upon them). As Allah the Almighty stated in the Qur'an : The people of Saleh said, **"Do you forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped?"** [Hud 11: 62]. The people of Shu'aib said, as Allah pointed out in the Qur'an **"Does your religion of prayers command you that we leave whatever our forefathers used to worship?"** [Hud 11: 87]. The people of Abraham, after they were silenced by argument, said, as stated in the Qur'an **"...We worship idols and we remain constantly in attendance on them. (Abraham) said, 'Do they listen to you when you call on them or they do you good or harm?' They said, Nay, but we found our fathers doing."** [Shuaraa 26 : 70-74]. Pharoah said to Moses, as Allah demonstrated in the Qur'an : **"... What then is the condition of previous generations."** [Taha 20:51]

Who were before you and did the same thing by following the footprints of their parents. Look what happened to them. Thus, unbelievers have been opposing the truth with weak and foolish arguments.

## SECOND:

A suspicion raised by the pagans of Quraish and others to justify their deeds of idolatry was the issue of divine predestination. Allah the Almighty said in the Qur'an: **"Those who give partners to Allah will say' If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our fathers, nor should we have had any taboos."** [Anam 6 :148]

In another verse, Allah the Almighty stated in the Qur'an **"The worshippers of false gods say' If Allah had so willed we should not have worshipped aught but Him, neither we nor our fathers, nor should we have prescribed prohibition other than His."** [Nahl 16: 35].

Again in another verse, Allah the Almighty stated in the Qur'an: **"They say: If it had been the will of Allah, Most Gracious, we should not have worshipped such deities."** [Zukhruf 43 : 20].

Concerning the above verse and concerning the predestination of man, Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir, the well known scholar explained in his commentary of the Qur'an [Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2 :186], that Allah the Almighty detailed the suspicions of pagans. Commenting on their plea that Allah knows what they are doing, thus, they are predestined and have no control over their actions and that since Allah is capable of inspiring them with faith and preventing them from associating partners with Him, but He did not do so, which indicated that Allah was pleased with their actions, Ibn Kathir said, *"This is an invalid argument because if Allah had so willed, He would not have passed His wrath on them; He would also not have destroyed them or warned them of the severest punishment through His messengers who were sent to those particular people. Allah the Almighty said in the Qur'an: "Do you have any knowledge that Allah is pleased with what you are doing ? If so (then you produce it) why are you hiding it? You show it to Us. You are only following conjecture. This is only your imagination telling you those things (you are just telling lies)."*

Ibn Kathir said [Ibid; 2 : 586-7] that the pagans' plea, that if Allah disliked what they were doing then He would have punished them and would not have enabled them to do so, was refuted as Allah said in the Qur'an: "Our Messengers duty is only to convey the message clearly." The following verse of the Qur'an presents some facts regarding that topic. He, the Almighty stated in the Qur'an: **"And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid Tâghût (all false deities i.e. do not worship Tâghût besides Allâh)." Then of them were some whom Allah guided and of them were some**

**upon whom the straying was justified. So travel through the land and see what was the end of those who denied (the truth)." [Nahl 16: 36]**

So, it is evident that Allah the Almighty has conveyed to every people His disapproval of their deeds of idolatry through His apostles. All Prophets called their people to worship Allah Alone and to avoid evil.

When idolatry appeared among mankind with the people of Noah (peace be upon him), he came to his people with a clear message . Thereafter, Messengers of Allah continuously were sent until they ended with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). His message was universalized for all jinn and mankind throughout the world and will last until the Day of Judgement. Allah the Almighty said in the Qur'an: **"Not an apostle did We send before you without this inspiration sent by Us to him : that there is no god but I, therefore worship and serve Me."** [Anbiya 21:25] The Qur'an also stated, **"And question you Our apostle whom We sent before you. Did We appoint any deities other than Allah, Most Gracious, to be worshipped?"** [Zukhruf 43 : 45]

Moreover, the Qur'an also stated: **"And verily, We have sent among every *Ummah* (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid *Tâghût* (all false deities)." [Nahl 16: 36]**

How could it be, after all this that a pagan could dare to say, "If Allah willed we should not have adored anything except Him."! It is clear that Allah did not will it so because He forbade it through His Messengers. Their setting up partners to Him does not mean that they were predestined to it. Allah had given them freewill and they, themselves, chose to follow evil despite warnings by Allah and His Messengers of the severest punishment. With these arguments, pagans do not mean to apologize because they think they are doing good, and that they are adoring deities to **"draw them close to Allah."** [Az-Zumar 39: 3]. Indeed their arguments are not meant for an excuse, but they are trying to prove that what they have been doing was legitimate, and that Allah was pleased with it. Allah the Almighty therefore refuted their arguments by saying that if it were so, then why did He send Messengers to convey His disapproval to them, and why were they then punished for it.

### **THIRD:**

A suspicion raised by pagans is that by merely uttering the testimony (There is no god but Allah), one is entitled to enter Paradise, even if he held others as equal to Allah and acted in aversion to the articles of faith. They argue so in the light of a Hadith (saying by the Holy Prophet) that *"one who utters the testimony of faith,*

*(There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah) is protected from the fires of hell."* The reply to this suspicion is that the above saying of the Prophet refers to the person who uttered the testimony of faith without acting contrary to it until his death - the person who uttered it whole-heartedly and honestly, and rejected worshipping anything except Allah throughout his life will then be saved from the fires of hell." The Hadith narrated by Atban, states: "Allah has protected from the fire those who said" (There is no god but Allah) seeking only the pleasure of Allah" [Sahih Muslim (Arabic Edition) : 456]

A Hadith narrated in the collection of Muslim stated, "*A person who utters, (There is no god but Allah), and rejected deities, his wealth and blood become inviolable, and he is rewarded by Allah*".[Ibid 153]

In this Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) put forth two conditions for the protection of wealth and blood: pronouncing (There is no god but Allah) and rejecting deities. The mere utterance of words is not enough, but it has to be substantiated by acting upon it. Pronouncement of (There is no god but Allah) will lead the believer to enter Paradise and be rescued from the fires of hell provided that all conditions of faith have been fulfilled and he has not acted in contradiction to them. Al-Hassan (Allah's mercy be upon him) was told that people who pronounced 'There is no god but Allah' will enter Paradise. He said, whoever uttered: 'There is no god Allah', and fulfilled its conditions, will enter Paradise. Wahb ibn Munabbih was asked: "Is 'There is no god but Allah' the key to Paradise?" He replied, "Yes indeed it is, but every key has teeth. So, if you bring the key with its teeth, Paradise will be opened for you; otherwise, it will not." Thus, we understand that the mere utterance of: 'There is no god but Allah' is not enough to enter Paradise, particularly when we act contrarily by invoking the dead pious men or saints for instance, and failing to reject deities other than Allah the Almighty.

#### **FOURTH:**

Pagans also claimed that no idolatry (*Shirk*) will take place among the people of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as long as they say 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah', and what they do in connection to the cult of the saints is not idolatry. First of all, it is wrong to assume that no idolatry will take place among the people of Muhammad. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that similarities to Jews and Christians will appear in the deeds of his people. We know that they have also adored their popes and monks the same as deities. The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "**You will follow the ways of those who passed before you exactly in the same manner. Even if they enter the hole of a lizard,**

**you will also enter it." They (his companions) said: "O, Messenger of Allah, do you mean Jews and Christians?" He said, "Then, who else?" [Sahih Bukhari 13: 300 (Fath-ul-Bari)]**

So the Prophet PBUH has informed us that among his people will be those who follow the previous people in their dogmas, manners and general characteristics. As idolatry was present in previous nations, it will also be found among people today. This has already happened, for we still hear of people adoring graves of pious men and saints in different manners and sacrifices are offered to them. The Prophet PBUH had also warned us that the Day of Resurrection would not come until a group from among his people joined idolaters and worshipped deities. [See Sunan Abu Dawood (Arabic Edition) no.4252 concerning afflictions]

Today, a number of false groups and destructive ideologies have emerged and led people out of the bounds of Islam.

#### **FIFTH:**

They also argue on the basis of a Hadith which says, "Certainly Satan has despaired from being adored by prayer holders in the Arabian Peninsula". Though the Hadith is sound, drawing a conclusion that idolatry would be impossible in the Arabian Peninsula would be incorrect. Ibn Rajab (Allah's mercy be upon him) said : "It means that Satan has despaired from the entire people falling into idolatry." The same interpretation has been given by Ibn Kathir in the meaning of the following Qur'anic verse: Today, the unbelievers have despaired at averting you from your religion." Grammatically, the Arabic verb for despair is in a transitive form which, in Arabic, demonstrates that Satan's despairing is a result of his own assumption, based on incorrect knowledge. Moreover, such an interpretation is contradicting the previously mentioned Prophetic traditions and also it is in contradiction in reality because we know that many Arabs turned away from Islam just after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

#### **SIXTH:**

Regarding the pagans' attachment to the issue of intercession (*Shafaa'ah*), such claimers say, "We do not want virtuous people and saints to provide for our needs, but we want them to intercede with Allah for us because they are pious people and they have an honourable status with Allah the Almighty. Such people add that intercession is proven by a verse in the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. In fact, this is the same argument presented earlier by the pagans in trying to justify their adherence to their deities. About them, Allah the Almighty has said in the Qur'an "**And those who take**

***Auliâ'* (protectors and helpers) besides Him (say): "We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allâh."** [Zumar 39: 3]. Furthermore, the Qur'an has discussed the situation of such claimers as in the verse **"And they worship besides Allâh things that hurt them not, nor profit them, and they say: "These are our intercessors with Allâh."** [Yunus 10:18]

Although intercession is authentic and valid, it is an attribute of Allah alone as He stated in the Qur'an **"Say: To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth."** [Zumar 39: 44]

Therefore, intercession should be sought from Allah alone, and not from the graves of the pious dead and saints. Allah the Almighty has informed us about the two essential conditions for granting intercession. One concerns the intercessor. Allah has said in the Qur'an **"Who is there who can intercede in His presence except as He permits."** [Baqarah 2 : 255]. The second condition is that intercession may only be sought for a person who is a true believer who has never set up partners with Allah and with whom Allah is pleased. Allah has said in the Qur'an **"And they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable."** [Anbiya 21: 28]

Also, He the Almighty has stated in the Qur'an **"No matter how many the angels are in the heavens, their intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He pleases and that he is acceptable to Him."**[Najm 53: 26]

Moreover, Allah the Almighty has so stated in the Qur'an **"On that day no intercession shall avail, except the one for whom the Most Beneficent (Allâh) has given permission and whose word is acceptable to Him."** [Taha 20: 109]

It is clear from the above verses that Allah has not granted the right of intercession in His presence to any one from among the angels, prophets or deities because it is His exclusive right, and it can be solicited only for Him. Allah the Almighty has said in the Qur'an **"To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession"** [Zumar 39: 44]

Allah alone grants permission for intercession. Without His permission, no one will dare come forward to intercede in His presence. The matter is not like what happens among our people in that intercessors may approach even if they have no permission, and their intercession may be accepted against one's will if the intercessor is an influential person and can prevail. But such can-not be the case with Allah because Allah is under pressure from no one. Everyone seeks His pleasure, so one cannot



present anything against Allah's rules. Man's knowledge does not comprehend everything about Allah's creatures, and, thus, he is not allowed to interfere. Allah's knowledge about His people is comprehensive and all inclusive. Therefore, He does not need anyone to inform Him about anything or recommend to Him what to do. In fact, the reality of intercession with Allah is that Allah wants to forgive certain lapses of His true servants. So, Allah grants this forgiveness through prayers by those who have permission to intercede as an honour.

### **SEVENTH:**

Another suspicion concerns the status of virtuous people and saints whom Allah has raised in dignity. Allah has said in the Qur'an **"Behold! Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve. Those who believe and constantly guard against evil. For them are glad tidings in this life and the hereafter."** [Yunus 10: 62-64]. Thus, to be devoted to the items and ask their blessings is, in fact, an expression of love for them. Similarly, because of their exalted rank, one may seek to become nearer to Allah.

In order to clarify these suspicions, we should know that all believers are the friends of Allah. Their friendship with Allah the Almighty will depend on the strength of their belief and their good deeds, but to specifically designate an individual as Allah's friend requires evidence from the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. If such a case is supported by Qur'anic proofs, then it may be accepted; without such proofs no one can be designated as such with certainty. Hopefully, every true believer will be a friend of Allah. If a particular individual, upon support of Qur'anic proofs, is from among Allah's friends, then his status should not be exaggerated to excess. Such acts may lead to idolatry and, therefore, are prohibited. Good people should be imitated in deed and action, but exaggeration of their status may lead to deification as it did in the case of the people of Noah. Allah, and the Prophet, warned about excessive exaltation of virtuous people in several verses. Allah said in the Qur'an **"Say: O people of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians) exceed not the proper bounds in your religion."** [Maida 5: 77]

Also, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said *"Do not exalt me as Christians did with Mary's son. Verily, I am a human, so call me servant of Allah and His Prophet."* [Sahih Bukhari (Arabic Edition) 6: 478]. In addition, Guardian Lord said in the Qur'an **"Invoke Me, I will answer your call."** [Ghafir 40: 60]. Also He said, **"And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad SAW) concerning Me, then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the**

**invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor)."**[ Baqarah 2:186]

He, the Almighty also said in the Qur'an **"Call on your Lord with humility and in private."** [Araaf 7: 55]. And **"Call on your Lord with devotion"** [Ghafir 40: 65]

All of the above verses from the Qur'an emphasize invocation of Allah directly without any mediation. Virtuous people and saints, themselves, need the mercy of Allah. Allah has said in the Qur'an **"Those whom they call upon, do desire for themselves means of access to their Lord. Even those who are nearest, they hope for His mercy and fear His wrath."** [Isra 17: 57]

In the interpretation of the above verse, Ibn Abbas has said that the prophet had asserted that they adored angels, Christ and Azra. The above verse was revealed as refutation to the Jews' and Christians' false thinking. This verse emphasized that angels, who were adored by people, would themselves seek access to Allah, desire His mercy and fear His wrath. Such a creature can certainly never be invoked with Allah. [Ibn Kathir Interpretation of the Qur'an 3 : 46]. Ibn Taimiyah (may Allah's mercy be upon him) said that the above verse concerns all those who are taken as deities and who are themselves adorers and worshippers of Allah whether they are from among the angels, jinn or humans. This verse is addressed to all people who invoke anyone or anything which, by itself, seeks access to Allah, desires His mercy and fears His wrath. The context of this verse also includes those who invoke deceased saints or someone who is not present from the apostles or saints in the same context as those who call upon angels or jinns. [Ibn Taimiyah's Collection of Fatwa 11:529]

#### **EIGHTH:**

From the following verses, the idolaters deduce the permissibility of seeking mediators between themselves and Allah. The Almighty stated in the Qur'an **"O you who believe, do your duty to Allah and seek the means of approach to Him."**[Maidah 5:35]. He the Almighty also stated in the Qur'an **"Those whom they call upon, do desire for themselves means of access to their Lord. Even those who are nearest."** [Isra 17: 57]. In fact, these verses mean that one can have access to Allah by good deeds, and not through mediation of Prophets or saints as they erroneously understand. One action is permitted, while the other is prohibited.

Permissible cases include:

1. Seeking access to Allah by his beautiful names. Allah the Almighty has said, "**The most beautiful names belong to Allah. So call on Him by them.**" [Araf 7 : 180] Muslims may ask Allah by His own names and attributes to fulfill one's needs.

2. Seeking access to Allah by showing one's need and desire for Him. As prophet Job (Allah's peace be on him) said, "**Truly distress has seized me. But You are the most merciful of those who are merciful.**"[Anbiya 21: 83]. And as Zakariya (Allah's peace be on him) said, "**O my Lord! Infirm indeed are my bones and the hair of my head is glistening. But never am I unblessed, my Lord, in my prayer to You.**" [Mariam 19 : 4] And as Zun-nun the Prophet (peace be upon him) exclaimed, "***Lâ ilâha illa Anta* [none has the right to be worshipped but You (O Allâh)], Glorified (and Exalted) are You [above all that (evil) they associate with You]. Truly, I have been of the wrong-doers.**" [Anbiya 21:87]

3. Seeking access to Allah with good deeds as Allah has said, "**Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling us to faith, Believe you in the Lord, and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and blot out from us our iniquities.**"[Ale-Imran 3 :193]. This is also illustrated in the Hadith regarding the three individuals who were trapped by a rock. They invoked Allah by their good deeds and were released. [Sahih Bukhari (Arabic Edition) 4: 369-370]

This is the sort of mediation mentioned in the above verses concerning seeking access to Allah by good deeds.

4. Seeking access to Allah by the prayer of living pious people, i.e., you might visit a pious man and ask him to pray Allah on your behalf. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to some of his companions, "*O, my brother, remember me when you pray to Allah.*" [Abu Dawood No.1498, Tirmidhi No.3557]. The companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with him) also used to request the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pray Allah for them. Similarly, they used to request prayers from each other.

As for the invocation of a medium, which is prohibited, it means seeking favour from the dead pious men or saints or invoking the living for one's needs. It is forbidden because this may eventually lead to greater idolatry. For instance, to say, "O Allah I invoke you by the name of so-and-so (dead or living)," or to say, "O, Allah provide me for my need by the virtue of so-and-so (dead or living)" is forbidden. Adoring that medium or offering sacrifices to him is undoubtedly idolatrous as in the case of slaughtering an animal for a saint, making offerings to his shrine or invoking him for help or assistance in any form. We pray Allah to enlighten the Muslims in their religion, support them against their enemies and guide them to the right path.

## NINTH:

A contention of the idolaters is also indicated through their attachment to some controversial Prophetic traditions. They assume that these traditions provide evidence for legitimacy of their wrong-doings. They quote one Hadith from the book of Tirmidhi (Hadith no.3573), narrated by Uthman ibn Hanif. He related that a blind man came to the Prophet and asked him to pray Allah to cure him. The Prophet told him, "If you wish, I will pray for you, but if you have patience, that will be better for you." The blind man insisted that the Prophet pray for him, so the Prophet asked him to make ablution properly and to say the following prayer : "O, Allah, I invoke You through Your Apostle, Muhammad, the Apostle of mercy, whom I approached to pray to my Guardian-Lord to fulfill my need. O, Allah, accept his mediation for me."

According to the book of Tirmidhi, this Hadith is good and correct, but we do not know of its narration except through Abu Jafar who is other than AI-Khatmi. However, even if the Hadith is correct, it is not a point of argument in this discussion because the blind man requested the Prophet to pray for him. He then invoked Allah with his own prayer in the presence of the Prophet, which is permissible. One is allowed to request a living person to pray for him.

There is no indication of invoking the dead or others for mediation, which we stress at this point is forbidden. In the case of the blind man, he was asked by the Prophet to pray Allah to accept the prophet's intercession for him in praying Allah for a cure. Therefore, this Hadith does not prove permissibility of mediation or invoking the dead or other saints, which is the focus of this discussion. They (the idolaters) also make inference from a false and fabricated Hadith which says, "The prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Seek access to Allah with my rank, because my rank with Allah is highly exalted' This Hadith is fabricated and is a lie against the prophet (peace be upon him) as confirmed by Ibn Taimiyah (Allah's mercy be on him). [Ibn Taimiyah's Collection of Verdicts 1: 319,346]

## TENTH:

The claimers of such permission of intercession also depend on tales and dreams. They say that so-and-so, for instance, came to the shrine of so-and-so and saw something in a dream. One of their famous dreams is that Atabi said, "I was sitting by the grave of the Prophet when a Bedouin came and said Peace of Allah be on you, O Apostle of Allah. Then he added, Allah has said in the Qur'an, **"If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto you and asked Allah's forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful."** [Nisa 4 : 64]. I have therefore come to you to request your mediation with

my Guardian-Lord for granting me forgiveness. Then he read his composition as follows:

The best and the greatest of men is buried in this ground, the hills and plains of which have come pleasant and sweet. My soul be sacrificed for the grave you are dwelling in. It contains purity, nobility and generosity.

Atabi continued to tell us about what happened after the Bedouin had gone back. He said, "I fell asleep and saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) in my dream saying to me, "O Atabi, follow the Bedouin and convey to him the good news that Allah has granted him forgiveness."

In the first place, tales and dreams do not stand as evidence for matters pertaining to ideology commands and decrees of Allah require authoritative evidence from divine sources. Secondly, the meaning of the above verse from the Qur'an concerns one who came to the Holy Prophet during his life time and not after his death. It is evident here that no one of the companions of the Prophet or the true followers in later generations ever came to the Prophet's grave to request his mediation for forgiveness. If such visits to the Prophet's grave had been permissible, then the companions of the Prophet would have indeed done so due to their diligence in following his commands.

### **ELEVENTH:**

The idolaters (*Mushrikeen*) also argue that certain persons received fulfillment of their desires (at certain shrines, or through the virtue of certain pious men or saints). In fact even if we assume that some people could have their needs fulfilled through means of idolatry, this would not lead us to conclude that such things have become permissible. That one's wish was granted at the time that he invoked a certain pious person may be purely coincidental; since we know that all that comes to us is a result of Allah's will alone. A mere coincidence, if any, does not make things forbidden by Allah the Almighty permissible. Clearly, idolaters (*Mushrikeen*) do not have any evidence to justify their wrong doings. Allah has said in the Qur'an: **"And whoever invokes (or worships), besides Allâh, any other ilâh (god), of whom he has no proof."**

[Al-Muminun 23 :117]

So, idolaters have no evidence or proof, while the Oneness of Allah is based up on absolute proofs and very clear evidence. Allah the Almighty has said in the Qur'an **"Is there a doubt about Allah, the creator of the heavens and the earth."** [Ibrahim 14: 10]

He the Almighty has also said in the Qur'an: **"O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may become *Al-Muttaqûn* (pious). Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He Alone has the right to be worshipped)."** [Baqarah 2 : 21-22]

## **TWELFTH:**

Extremist mystics and their followers say that idolatry (*Shirk*) is the love of the worldly life and the yearning to attain its pleasure. In fact, with such argument, they intend to hide their own greater idolatry which is reflected in their veneration of graves and the cults of their saints. As far as the yearning for material life is concerned, it is rewardable as long as it is within the limits which have been set by Allah and it is encouraged for the purpose of obtaining sustenance to continue in the worship of Allah the Almighty.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

We may conclude here that idolatry is a most heinous sin. Allah the Almighty has said, **"Verily! Joining others in worship with Allâh (*Shirk*) is a great *Zûlm* (wrong) indeed."** [Luqman 31:13] The idolater (*mushrik*) will never be granted forgiveness if he has not renounced idolatry before his death. Allah the Almighty has also said in the Qur'an: **"Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him. But He forgives anything else."**[Nisa 4 : 48]. The idolater will never enter Paradise. Allah stated in the Qur'an **"... Whoever joins other gods with Allah, He will forbid him the Paradise..."** [Maidah 5 : 72]. Idolaters are unclean (mentally and spiritually due to their association of other gods with Allah or due to their rejection of the authority of Allah) and therefore they are not allowed to enter the Sacred Mosque, as stated in the Qur'an: **"O, you believers! Truly the pagans are unclean. So let them not after this year of theirs (i.e. live) approach the Sacred Mosque."** [Tawbah 9: 28]

The blood and wealth of an idolater is not inviolable. As Allah the Almighty has stated in the Qur'an **"When the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them. And seize them beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war. But if they repent and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them."** [Tawbah 9:5]

The idolater has gone astray and sinned by turning away from Monotheism, and he has fallen a far distance, as Allah the Almighty has stated in the Qur'an, **"If any one assigns partners to Allah, he is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a distant place."** [Hajj 22 :31]. The true believer is not allowed to marry an idolater, as He, the Almighty stated in the Qur'an **"Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman though she allures you. Nor marry your girls to unbelievers until they believe. A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever who allures you."** [Baqarah 2: 221]

The worship and prayer of an idolater is not accepted by Allah the Almighty, for Allah the Almighty has stated in the Qur'an **"It has already been revealed to you, as it was to those before you, if you were to joining gods with Allah, truly fruitless will be your work in life, And you will surely be among those who lose."** [Zumar 39: 65]. He, the Almighty furthermore stated in the Qur'an **"If they were to join other gods with Allah, all that they did would be vain for them."** [Anam 6: 58]

We pray Allah to keep us away from suspicions, idolatry, hypocrisy, bad conduct and all adversities in our wealth and family. O, Allah, guide us to the right path and enable us to follow it and keep us away from falsehood and make it clear to us.

**"Glory be to the Lord, of honor and power. He is free from what they ascribe to Hi. And peace and blessings of Allah be upon the apostles. And praise to Allah, the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds."**[Saffat 37: 180-182]. **"Glory to Him, and He is above the partners they ascribe unto Him"**[Nahl16:1]. **"Glory to Him! He is high above all that they say! Exalted and Great (beyond measure)"** [Isra 17 : 43]

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon our prophet Muhammad, his companions and his true followers.